

## Muhammed Bekjanov (m)

**Adoption Status:** Not Adopted

**Country:** Uzbekistan

**Occupation:** Prominent Uzbek journalist in the period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union

**Detained Since:** March 15, 1999

**Charges:** N/A



**Sentence:** 10 years imprisonment. In January 2012, days before he was due to be released, an Uzbek court handed him an additional five-year prison term on charges of breaking unspecified prison rules.

**Additional:** Bekjanov came to be recognized as a leading voice in the struggle for democracy in Uzbekistan, becoming an outspoken critic of the party of Islam Karimov. Karimov worked consistently to stifle the voice of the opposition and his government's efforts led to the banning of his newspaper *Erk* in 1994. Consequently, Bekjanov was forced to flee to Ukraine and to sever ties with the *Erk* party and its publications. In 1999, a series of explosions in Tashkent was blamed on *Erk* and President Karimov ordered all members associated with the group to be arrested. Due to his previous connections to the opposition and his work as a journalist for *Erk*, Bekjanov was arrested in Kyiv on March 15, 1999, and extradited to Uzbekistan.

At his trial five months later, Bekjanov's testimony was procured through pervasive torture during his interrogation. Due to his forced self-incrimination, Bekjanov was convicted of conspiracy related to the Tashkent bombings and was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

In January 2012, days before he was due to be released, an Uzbek court handed him another five-year prison term on charges of breaking unspecified prison rules. According to recent news reports, he is being held at a prison in the central Navoi region of Uzbekistan.

**Not Adopted**